

LEGISLATIVE BILL 47

Approved by the Governor February 22, 2011

Introduced by Fischer, 43.

FOR AN ACT relating to railroad carriers; to amend section 86-164, Revised Statutes Cumulative Supplement, 2010; to include certain third parties in the definition of railroad carrier; to repeal the original section; and to declare an emergency.

Be it enacted by the people of the State of Nebraska,

Section 1. Section 86-164, Revised Statutes Cumulative Supplement, 2010, is amended to read:

86-164 (1) Any telecommunications carrier that intends to place a line, wire, or cable across a railroad right-of-way shall request permission for such placement from the railroad carrier. The request shall be in the form of a completed crossing application, including engineering specifications. Upon receipt of such application, the railroad carrier and the telecommunications carrier may enter into a binding wire-crossing agreement. If the railroad carrier and the telecommunications carrier are unable to negotiate a binding wire-crossing agreement within sixty days after receipt of the crossing application by the railroad carrier, either party may submit a petition to the commission for a hearing on the disputed terms and conditions of the purported wire-crossing agreement.

(2) (a) Unless otherwise agreed to by all parties, the commission shall, after providing proper notice, hold and complete such hearing within sixty days after receipt of the petition. The commission shall issue an order of its decision within thirty days after the hearing. In rendering its decision, the commission shall consider whether the terms and conditions at issue are unreasonable or against the public interest, taking into account safety, engineering, and access requirements of the railroad carrier as such requirements are prescribed by the Federal Railroad Administration and established rail industry standards.

(b) Upon issuance of an order by the commission under subdivision (a) of this subsection, the railroad carrier and the telecommunications carrier shall have fifteen days after the date of issuance to file a conforming wire-crossing agreement with the commission. The commission shall have fifteen days after the date of such filing to approve or reject the agreement. If the commission does not issue an approval or rejection of such agreement within the fifteen-day requirement, the agreement shall be deemed approved. The commission may reject a wire-crossing agreement if it finds that the agreement does not conform to the order issued by the commission. If the commission enters such a finding, the parties shall revise the agreement to comply with the commission's order and shall refile the agreement to the commission for further review. If the commission does not approve or reject the revised agreement within fifteen days after the date of refiling, the agreement shall be deemed approved.

(3) (a) Except as provided in subsection (4) of this section or as otherwise agreed to by all parties, if a telecommunications carrier places a line, wire, or cable across a railroad right-of-way pursuant to this section, it shall pay the railroad carrier, owner, manager, agent, or representative of the railroad carrier a one-time standard crossing fee of one thousand two hundred fifty dollars for each applicable crossing. In addition to the standard crossing fee, the telecommunications carrier shall reimburse the railroad carrier for any actual flagging expenses associated with the placement of the line, wire, or cable.

(b) The standard crossing fee shall be in lieu of any license fee or any other fees or charges to reimburse the railroad carrier for any direct expense incurred as a result of the placement of the line, wire, or cable.

(4) If a railroad carrier or telecommunications carrier believes a special circumstance exists for the placement of a line, wire, or cable across a railroad right-of-way, the railroad carrier or telecommunications carrier may petition the commission for additional requirements or for modification of the standard crossing fee in its initial petition to the commission pursuant to subsection (1) of this section. If the petition is filed with the request for additional requirements or modification, the commission shall determine if a special circumstance exists that necessitates additional requirements for such placement or a modification of the standard crossing fee.

(5) This section applies to any telecommunications carrier certified by the commission pursuant to section 86-128. This section does not apply to any longitudinal encumbrance or any line, wire, or cable within any

public right-of-way and does not change, modify, or supersede any rights or obligations created pursuant to sections 86-701 to 86-707.

(6) (a) A wire-crossing agreement between a railroad carrier and a telecommunications carrier that includes a provision, clause, covenant, or agreement contained in, collateral to, or affecting such wire-crossing agreement that purports to indemnify, defend, or hold harmless the railroad carrier from any liability for loss or damage resulting from the negligence or willful and wanton misconduct of the carrier or its agents, employees, or independent contractors who are directly responsible to such carrier or has the effect of indemnifying, defending, or holding harmless such carrier from the negligence or willful and wanton misconduct of the carrier or its agents, employees, or independent contractors who are directly responsible to the carrier is against the public policy of this state and is unenforceable.

(b) Nothing in this section shall affect a provision, clause, covenant, or agreement in which the telecommunications carrier indemnifies, defends, or holds harmless a railroad carrier against liability for loss or damage to the extent that the loss or damage results from the negligence or willful and wanton misconduct of the telecommunications carrier or its agents, employees, or independent contractors who are directly responsible to the telecommunications carrier.

(7) For purposes of this section:

(a) Railroad carrier has the same meaning as in section 75-402; and

(b) Telecommunications carrier means a telecommunications common carrier as defined in section 86-118 or a telecommunications contract carrier as defined in section 86-120.

Sec. 2. Original section 86-164, Revised Statutes Cumulative Supplement, 2010, is repealed.

Sec. 3. Since an emergency exists, this act takes effect when passed and approved according to law.